



# AETC News Clips

## Keesler AFB, Miss.



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### House expected to pass measure to pay for wars, aid victims of Hurricane Katrina

By Ana Radelat  
Clarion-Ledger Washington Bureau



**Cochran**

WASHINGTON — The House hoped to approve a massive defense bill late Sunday night that would pay for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — and help uninsured hurricane victims.

The \$453 billion defense spending bill includes \$29 billion for hurricane recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast. "This is a big victory for Katrina disaster victims," Sen. Thad Cochran said. "This legislation will accelerate and improve the recovery from the damages caused by the hurricanes."

But the package may face trouble in the Senate, which planned to start debate on the defense bill today, because it contains a controversial provision that would open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

#### **Money**

The hurricane relief package also includes:

- \$100,000 for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers repairs at Gulfport's harbor and \$150,000 for repairs at Pascagoula's harbor.
- \$125 million for law enforcement agencies in parishes or counties that have experienced an increase in population because of hurricane evacuees.
- \$45 million for the Armed Forces Retirement Center in Gulfport.
- \$293 billion to repair the veterans hospital in Biloxi.
- \$43.4 million to help repair Keesler Air Force Base.
- \$278 million to replace damaged housing at Keesler Air Force Base.
- \$350 million to repair NASA facilities, including the Stennis Space Center.
- \$95 million for the Army National Guard to build five new readiness centers and two maintenance centers in the state.
- \$2 billion to continue Gulf Coast

*Clarion-Ledger*  
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shipbuilding projects.

- \$2.75 billion to repair roads and bridges in the state, including U.S. 90 and the U.S. 90 bridge.

"We don't have any assurance that it's going to pass (the Senate) in the next 48 hours," said Cochran press secretary Jenny Manley. "But we think the hardest part is behind us."

Much of the \$29 billion in the defense bill for hurricane assistance would be spent on federal obligations to repair hurricane-wrecked military bases, roads, bridges and public buildings.



**Barbour**

But it also includes \$11.5 billion for Community Development Block Grants that could be used by Gov. Haley Barbour and other governors to provide help to hurricane victims who lacked federal flood insurance. Negotiators were working on a funding formula late Sunday, but it's expected that Mississippi would receive about \$5 billion of the grant money.

About 30,000 Mississippi homeowners have uninsured losses because of hurricane-induced flooding.

"Hurricane Katrina wiped out many things on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but she did not — could not — wipe out our resolve to recover and rebuild bigger and better than before," Barbour said in a statement released Sunday. "I can think of no better Christmas package than final congressional approval of this hurricane relief package."

Most of the money, about \$24 billion, in the hurricane package comes from money appropriated for the Federal Emergency Management Agency earlier this year. But Cochran, leader of the Senate Appropriations Committee, also won approval for an additional \$5 billion that would come from a 1 percent cut in the funding of dozens of federal programs.

Approval to use \$11.5 billion of the hurricane aid package for block grants is a huge victory for Cochran and other lawmakers, including Rep. Gene Taylor, who sought federal help for the uninsured. Barbour, a Republican, also lobbied Congress this week on the need to provide a bailout for uninsured flood victims. He has proposed giving grants to victims who lived outside the federal flood plain. The grants would be used to help repair, rebuild or replace their homes.

Some key Republicans in Congress and the White House thought that federal help to those victims would dissuade coastal residents from buying flood insurance policies.

But Cochran and others argued that Hurricane Katrina was an "extraordinary event" that merited additional federal help.

The package also contains other provisions that were not requested by the White House, including \$1.6 billion to help schools and students affected by the hurricane and \$550 million for social service programs for hurricane victims. The package also contains \$1.1 billion for timber producers and other farmers who suffered storm damage.

***Clarion-Ledger***

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The hurricane package also contains \$2.9 billion for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects. Most of that money would be spent on levee rebuilding in Louisiana, but about \$230 million was set aside for Mississippi-specific projects. Another \$10 million was approved to study the installation of Category 5 hurricane protection along the Gulf Coast.

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### First lady, Santa Claus visit Coast bases

By **MICHAEL NEWSOM**

Military bases were abuzz over visitors last week when the first lady came to the Seabee base on Monday and Santa Claus landed at Keesler Air Force Base.

**Seabees** - First lady Laura Bush hosted the film, "A Very Beazley Christmas," to a group of children whose parents are deployed with the Seabees.

Bush showed the children the film, which is about the presidential family dogs Barney and Miss Beazley. She also visited with them while the 45 or so children made Christmas ornaments and wrote letters to their relatives who are deployed with Naval Mobile Construction Battalions 133 and 74. Some members of NMCB 74 returned to Gulfport last week, and all should be back by Christmas.

She told the children she would be thinking about them this Christmas.

"I know some of you might have a holiday without one parent," Bush said. "Maybe one or both were deployed, which will be sad."

**Air Force** - Santa Claus and his helpers landed at Keesler Air Force Base on Saturday morning. The jolly old gent was on base to deliver presents to children in D'Iberville at that city's Civic Center.

The Air Force also hosted an entrepreneur and Army Air Corps Veteran, who flew his 234th mission Wednesday. Alex Parker, who assisted with the revitalization of Times Square in New York City, flew with the 403rd Wing from Mobile to New Orleans and back to Keesler.

Parker earned the Distinguished Flying Cross in World War II, and in civilian life, bought and revitalized One Times Square, which is the building that hosts the annual New Year's Eve ball drop.

Parker flew in a C-130J, which is the craft most similar to the C-47s he flew in WWII.

**National Guard** - The 155th Brigade Combat Team continued to return from their yearlong deployment to Iraq, following an advance party that arrived on Dec. 10.

The flights were subject to delays by inclement weather, a National Guard news release said.

The 155th is a nearly 4,000-member Guard unit, of which about 3,500 are from Mississippi. The unit lost 24 members; 14 were Mississippians.

The party that came in Dec. 10 was the first wave of flights that should have the group all home by mid-January, Guard officials said.

As for the delay in the return flights, one member of the 155th said the group is meeting its target return date.

"We are still well within the timeline for our redeployment, and things are going well," Col. William Glasgow, executive officer for the 155th BCT said in a news release.

"I ask that all of the families remain patient and understand that, due to operational security, we can not advertise when each of the soldiers will be returning home."

*The Sun Herald*

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### To D'Iberville with love

## Truckloads of toys are Christmas gifts from California

SPECIAL TO SUN HERALD

**D'IBERVILLE** - D'Iberville will be the site of a special holiday gathering.

At 8 a.m. today, more than 3,000 children will receive gifts delivered by Santa Claus and his helpers, who will be flying in on a special Angel Flight America mission flown by Angel Flight Southeast pilot Dan Calugar.

The gifts have been collected and sent from thousands of miles away by businesses and citizens of Citrus Heights, Calif., as part of a day-long celebration of "the joy of holiday giving."

The Angel Flight Southeast that will deliver Santa and his helpers will originate from Asheville, N.C. Additional volunteers from California, Indiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Keesler Air Force Base and ROTC units will help deliver the gifts, which were driven in from the West Coast by the Mayflower moving company.

"The people of D'Iberville have truly been blessed by thousands of people who've assisted our somewhat neglected town to ensure that this population of 8,000 people gets the attention that they deserve," said Brenda Broussard, a D'Iberville city councilwoman. Approximately 90 percent of Broussard's district in D'Iberville was destroyed by Katrina.

Also assisting is Liz Krohn of the Sunrise Marketplace, a special business district in Citrus Heights of more than 500 shops and companies that brought together most of the special holiday gifts.

"We had a Mayflower transport bring in 50 bikes and helmets, several thousand gift cards - everything from power tools to pet food - to help an area that we think has been somewhat neglected in the post-Katrina relief efforts," Krohn said.

Angel Flight America and Angel Flight Southeast provide more than 90 percent of the free public flights to citizens who are financially distressed or otherwise unable to pay for travel.



# AETC News Clips

## Lackland AFB, Texas



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### ***Baby girl will have story to tell about Hurricane Katrina - and plenty of family to listen***

By Arlene Mannlein  
Herald & Review  
17 Dec 05

DECATUR - Guinevere Gephart, born Sept. 1 after her mother and father, Amy and Jeremy Gephart, were airlifted from the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast, has a lot of family grateful for her arrival.

The 3-month-old infant has two sets of five living generations on her father's side of the family.

One five-generation group includes Guinevere; her father; her grandmother Cyndy Woller of Arnold, Mo., formerly of Decatur; her great-grandmother Wilma Bondurant of Sevierville, Tenn., also formerly of Decatur; and her great-great-grandmother Helen Edmison of Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

According to Woller, Guinevere is the first great-great-grandchild Edmison has seen, even though she has others.

The other five generations are Guinevere, her father and grandmother Woller; her great-grandfather Gene Lynn of Eldorado, Kan.; and her great-great-grandmother Irene Lynn of Mount Vernon.

Several expectant Air Force families were airlifted from Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, after Katrina struck.

Guinevere was the first baby born, Jeremy Gephart said.

Before they got out of Mississippi, he said, they were awakened and told they'd have to leave their basement hospital room because of flooding. They didn't see any reason for concern, he said, because they had seen no water - until he noticed water seeping through the walls as they packed.

"It was about ankle deep," Gephart said. "It wasn't as bad as it sounds; it was just water."

After visiting in Missouri and Decatur, the Gepharts will be on their way to Japan where Gephart, an airman E2, will be stationed for three years.

The Decatur visit gave Donna Jones of Decatur, Amy's mother, a chance to see her first grandchild.





# AETC News Clips

## Luke AFB, Ariz.



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### LIFE AT LUKE

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THE GLENDALE REPUBLIC • WEEKEND EDITION, DECEMBER 17, 2005 **15**

## Ex-airman has seen much

### Tuskegee pilot visits Iraq troops

By David Madrid  
DAVID.MADRID@ARIZONA.PUBLIC.COM

Retired Air Force Col. Richard Toliver, one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen, is intimately familiar with racism and its de-meaning effects.

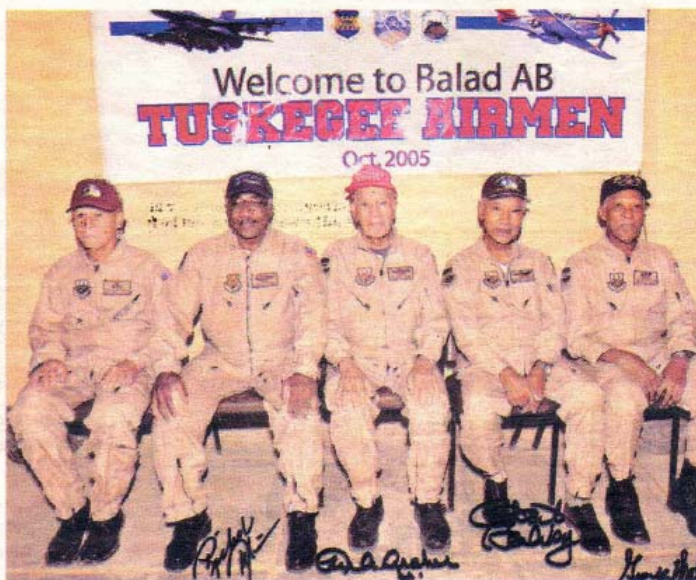
The Tuskegee Airmen, the country's first African-American combat pilots, had to battle the misperceptions of a nation, including a 1925 U.S. War Department report that claimed Blacks were inferior. The report said Blacks lacked the courage for battle, were unreliable under fire and were incapable of mastering the skills needed to operate military equipment in combat.

A lot has changed.

During a recent trip to Iraq, Goodyear resident Toliver and retired Lt. Col. Robert Ashby, a Sun City West resident, joined three fellow Tuskegee Airmen to visit the troops overseas.

"We went to encourage these young people, but I must tell you that it was we who came away exceedingly encouraged and invigorated by the spirit, the dedication, the motivation, the focus of these young men and women," said Toliver, 67.

"The bottom line is, we saw a face of America that we dreamed about 60 years ago, that we fought for 60 years ago, where young men and women of every color, every nationality that make up America today, stand shoulder to shoulder



Some Tuskegee Airmen recently went to Europe and the Middle East to visit troops. They were impressed by the troops' dedication and diversity. Richard Toliver (second from left) is from Goodyear, and Robert Ashby (second from right) is from Sun City West.

together getting the job done."

The Tuskegee Airmen visited troops at Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Ali al-Salem Air Base, Kuwait; Morón Air Base, Spain; and Balad Air Base, Iraq.

In 1941, with the help of Missouri Sen. Harry Truman, the first Blacks were allowed to participate in military aviation training at Tuskegee, Ala. The Tuskegee Airmen were born.

Official records show the airmen flew more than 15,000

sorties against the German Luftwaffe. The Black pilots excelled.

Toliver, a second-generation Tuskegee airman, served two tours in Vietnam, his first beginning in 1965. The first lieutenant flew 231 missions over South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

He returned to Vietnam seven years later as a captain and flew 215 missions.

Toliver also flew the F-15 Eagle at Luke Air Force Base.

Yet when Toliver joined the Air Force in the early 1960s, he couldn't find his family a decent place to live before he went off to fight in the war.

Another time, he was chased out of a coffee shop at 1 a.m. by men and women who wanted to beat him for coming inside.

"I remember sleeping on the side of the road in the freezing cold because there was no place I could stop and rest for the night," he said. "I went to war a few days later for this

### Tuskegee Airmen by the numbers in World War II

■ On Sept. 2, 1941, Capt. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first Black man to officially solo an aircraft as an officer of the Army Air Forces.

■ In the following four years, 992 pilots graduated at Tuskegee, and 450 were sent to combat.

■ The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 200 bomber-escort missions without losing a single American bomber to enemy fighters, a record unmatched by any other American aviators during World War II.

■ The Tuskegee Airmen shot down or damaged 136 enemy aircraft, destroyed or damaged 273 aircraft on the ground and hit scores of other targets, including sinking a German naval destroyer by machine-gun fire.

■ They received 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 744 Air Medals, 14 Bronze Stars, eight Purple Hearts and two Soldier medals.

■ Of the pilots, 66 were killed in aerial combat and 32 were forced down and captured as prisoners of war.

country."

The military, though, has always been a leader in racial diversity, Toliver said.

"Imagine what a thrill it was for me to see today, our young Black men, White men, women, Hispanics, Native Americans, who are standing there doing the job."

### Glendale youths send care items

Glendale students organized through the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission collected comfort items for 300 men and women from Luke Air Force Base who are overseas during the holidays.

The items included lip balm, small bottles of sunscreen, bug repellent, wipes, white athletic socks and plain T-shirts of all sizes, individual packets of Gatorade and Crystal Light, chewing gum, small bags of peanuts and trail mix, cereal bars and granola bars.

Monetary donations, with checks made payable to Operation Thunderbox, are being accepted to cover the \$30 per box postage. Operation Thunderbox is a local, non-profit and volunteer-led effort to send care packages to Luke airmen overseas. The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission is made up of 50 students from Glendale high schools. Send checks to 56th Fighter Wing Command Chief Office, Operation Thunderbox, 14185 W. Falcon St., Luke Air Force Base, AZ 85309-1629.



MICHAEL GING/THE REPUBLIC

### Feeling the need for speed

Sprint/Nextel has set up a NASCAR experience outside the Desert Star Enlisted Club at Luke Air Force Base in which people race NASCAR simulators that move side to side and up and down. Airman Kathryn Larison puts the pedal to the metal.

*The Arizona Republic*

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# AETC News Clips

## Maxwell AFB, Ala.



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### Calls help military families stay close

By **Crystal Bonvillian**  
**Montgomery Advertiser**  
Saturday December 17, 2005

Ashley Dearth-Crocker remembers how it felt to spend last Christmas without her dad, who was in Iraq.

This year, he's home, but her uncle still is overseas.

"It's hard because we're a close family," said Dearth-Crocker, 21. "We're all really close."

Local families that have loved ones serving abroad are getting through the holiday season as best they can. And military support groups -- plus their friends, neighbors, even strangers -- are making it easier.

Tamara Chapman's husband, Robin, is with his Army National Guard unit in Baghdad, Iraq. Family support workers with the Guard call her once or twice a week to see if there is anything she needs.

What Chapman said she needs more than anything are the calls she gets from Iraq.

"It's hard, but I just deal with it," she said. "I talk to him as much as I can, and as long as he is safe, I'm fine. He's doing what he signed up to do, but I'm very ready for him to be home."

On Friday, Dearth-Crocker got to call her uncle because of the generosity of Nextel. The telecommunications company also gave other military families the chance to call their loved ones who are deployed.

Nextel understands that holidays are difficult for families with loved ones in a war zone, said Brian Key, public relations specialist.

"Being in the telecommunications industry, that's what we want people to do, keep in touch," Key said.

Dearth-Crocker said it was tough to reach her uncle, Max Phillips, who is a senior master sergeant in the Air Force.



Ashley Dearth-Crocker of Montgomery talks Friday to her uncle, Max Phillips, who is stationed in Iraq.

-- David Bundy

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"I had to try six times before I got through," Dearth-Crocker said. "And then, he was sleeping. I think he was happy to hear from us, but he wasn't happy to have his sleep interrupted. They only get about five or six hours at a time when they're over there."

The 10-minute call allowed Dearth-Crocker to let Phillips know his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters are doing well.

"I think he was happy to hear that," she said.

The Family Support Unit at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base also understands the loneliness that separated military families feel.

Tech Sgt. Keith Sutton, the unit's readiness officer, spends much of his time making sure the troops' families are taken care of. That can mean everything from helping get a car fixed to or providing free daycare.

"We're responsible for trying to ease the stress," Sutton said.

Part of that responsibility is running Hearts Apart Morale Calls, a program that allows spouses or family members one free 15-minute phone call per week to their deployed loved one. Video phone capabilities on the base allow family members to see each other as they talk.

During the holiday season, efforts to comfort the families -- and the troops -- go into overdrive, Sutton said.

In January, Maxwell will host a meal for spouses and children to have some fun and fellowship. And right now, units are sending care packages and making phone calls to their members overseas.

Sutton calls deployed service members' families once a month to make sure they are doing well and to remind them of the services the base offers.

"When I make the phone calls," Sutton said, "you can just hear the relief in their voices to know that the base hasn't forgotten about them."

*Montgomery Advertiser*

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# AETC News Clips

## Sheppard AFB, Texas



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**20 Dec 05**

### Looking forward

#### Local group helps young man pay for surgery, aim high

**By Jessica Langdon/Times Record News**  
**December 20, 2005, Page 1A**

Lance Cannon has three major goals - to be a good husband, to be a good father and to fly F-16s.

"That's definitely the harder one to achieve," Cannon said.

He has already made major strides toward two of his goals. He's married to Kristen, and the couple is raising their 1-year-old son, Nikolas.

Cannon has his sights set on becoming a fighter pilot, but his own eyesight could have grounded his dreams. It wasn't up to the standards the United States Air Force requires for a pilot candidate.

But Cannon's other qualities caught the eye of a local group, and members made it their mission to help his dream take flight.

Cannon is studying physics at Midwestern State University and he's also in the ROTC program - along with several other cadets from MSU - in Denton.

He was wearing his cadet uniform at the promotion ceremony for his father, Chief Master Sgt. David Cannon, who works at Sheppard Air Force Base, when a new path toward his future started to take shape.

"I was really impressed with his poise and appearance," said Lt. Col. Richard McCool, Commander of the 88th Flying Training Squadron.

Cannon's father told McCool his son's goal was to fly for the Air Force, but his eyesight wasn't good enough for pilot training.

Cannon could have joined the military and made a living - then gotten the PRK surgery, the procedure approved by the military - and then applied as a young officer for pilot training. The chances of being selected would have been slimmer that way, McCool said. He wanted to see what other options were open - especially with only eyesight as a major obstacle for Cannon.

McCool is also the flight captain of the Texoma Chapter of the Daedalians. The Daedalians are a military fraternal organization, formed after World War I.

Military retirees in the community make up a large portion of the local group. The Daedalians have several scholarship programs, and they're geared toward people who plan to become pilots, McCool said.

He got in touch with Cannon's ROTC commander at the University of North Texas in Denton, and heard "glowing comments" about Cannon, who is a junior this year.

***Times Record News***

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**20 Dec 05**

His grades in physics are excellent.

"His exact words to me," McCool said of the commander, "'If this guy had the eyesight, I think he'd be a slam dunk for a pilot slot.' "

So the local Daedalian group put together a new idea for a scholarship and tested its wings with the national organization.

Instead of supplying money for school, the Daedalians wanted to offer a scholarship that would make it possible for Cannon to have his surgery, so he could apply directly for the pilot training program.

The group returned with its approval.

The scholarship didn't cover the entire cost, which is when more help came on board.

Dr. Mark Suggs in Wichita Falls said he would perform the procedure at a reduced rate.

"Col. McCool at Sheppard really kind of lit the fire under me," Cannon said. He said without the scholarship, the eye surgery wouldn't have been possible right now. He was grateful for Lt. Col. Patrick Smith, who is his Air Force ROTC detachment commander, and also to his family and everyone else who has offered support.

Cannon had the surgery in November, and it looks as if he's on his way to 20/20 vision, McCool said. He said Cannon also earned a scholarship through ROTC. He recently finished 20 flying hours in a Cessna 152.

Next month, he will send in his pilot training application information and should hear back in the spring, after a few months of nerve-wracking waiting.

David Cannon said he's proud of his son and said it would be nice to see another generation of military in the family.

Cannon said his wife is supporting him through school right now, and once he's commissioned, he plans to return the favor, and she'll go back to school.

With his eyesight corrected, he hopes the runway to his future is clear.

"I think most pilots love what they do," he said, and for this prospective pilot, the F-16 "seems to be calling my name."

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***Times Record News***

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